DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 057 567 EM 009 406

TITLE	Student Directed Curriculum: An Alternative Educational Approach.
INSTITUTION	Institute for the Advancement of Urban Education, New York, N.Y.
PUB DATE	17 Dec 71
NOTE	7p.
EDRS PRICE	MF-$0.65 HC-$3.29
DESCRIPTORS	Curriculum Design; Educational Change; *Films; *Secondary Education; *Student Centered Curriculum; Student Interests; Urban Education; *Urban Schools

ABSTRACT

A press release and preview guide describes a 20-minute film made by the Institute for the Advancement of Urban Education (IAUE). The film, which is based on a complete educational system developed by LAUE for urban high schools, is said to focus on the perceptions of inner-city students on how education can satisfy their concerns. It documents the steps and processes taken by the IAUE in establishing and implementing student directed curriculum in a large, metropolitan high school. The film presents the background of the high school, then shows the initial steps in setting up the curriculum. These included identifying the elements of the problem more clearly, initiating a collaborative planning process among all groups who had a stake in the success of the school, and then designing and managing a pilot program which incorporated all the components on an alternative educational approach. Students helped design their own curriculum in three broad areas: communications, behavioral studies, and technical-environmental studies. (JK)

ED057567

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FOR IMMEDIATE PRESS RELEASE

December 17, 1971

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NEW FILM AIDS CURRICULUM PLANNING IN INNER-CITY HIGH SCHOOLS

Student Directed Curriculum: An Alternative Educational Approach, a new 20-minute, 16-mm color-sound film was made available to the general educational public today by the Educational Film Division of The Institute for the Advancement of Urban Education.

The film, which is based on a complete educational system developed by IAUE especially for urban high schools, focuses on the perceptions of inner-city students on how education can satisfy their concerns. The film documents the practical steps and processes taken by the Institute in establishing and implementing Student Directed Curriculum in a large, metropolitan high school.

Lloyd B. Hunter, President of the Institute, who conceived and directed the development of the film, said that the film is one in a series of six which the Institute plans to produce this year. Other themes to be given cinematic treatment by the Institute include: Parental Involvement in the Schools; Desegregation; Evaluations and Teacher Training; and Education Vouchers. All of the films will focus on specific needs of the urban school.

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"The films are not designed to be teaching films, as such,"added Mr. Hunter,"but are conceived more as forming the foundation for the development of training programs, so that school districts may make use of the films to plan and design their own staff training programs."

The Student Directed Curriculum film, it is felt, provides an excellent foundation for each of the following important topics:

-Student Involvement in Curriculum Development

-In-service Training for Secondary School Teachers

-Paraprofessional Training

-Parent Involvement Training

-Non-Graded Formats

-School Without Walls.

The film is being distributed nationally by Educational Coordinates, Sunnyvale, California, and is available for rental or purchase.

Please consult the enclosed preview guide for additional information.

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Preview Guide For

STUDENT-DIRECTED CURRICULUM: AN ALTERNATIVE EDUCATIONAL APPROACH

Preview Guide For

STUDENT-DIRECTED CURRICULUM: AN ALTERNATIVE EDUCATIONAL APPROACH

OBJECTIVES:

1. To have the viewer see the processes that went into the formulation of the Student-Directed Curriculum Program.

2. To instruct the viewer on the curricular design followed in the Student-Directed Curriculum Project. This design incorporated mini-units on subjects of high student interest, behaviorally stated objectives, and varied learning activities.

3. To have the viewer gain awareness of the teaching skills required in facilitating learning that is student-oriented as distinct from directing learning that is subject- or teacher-oriented.

4. To instruct the viewer on strategies that can be followed in order to produce in students a sense of community spirit, and enhance a student's self-image.

5. To instruct the viewer on the elements of a humanized learning environment in which the needs of the person is the focus, and where youngsters of various backgrounds learn to relate to one another.

The setting for this film is Polytechnic High School in the Haight Ashbury section of San Francisco. Its recent problems are similar to those of many urban schools--high absenteeism, low student achievement, high teacher and administrative turnover, low student interest, and racial tension. These are symptoms that many inner city students do not view the school as helping them to achieve their goals; that the schools themselves are failing in their purposes.

Twenty years ago, Poly was considered a model school. Its student population then was predominately white. During the 1960's, the character of the community surrounding Poly changed. The school's ethnic composition shifted to over 80% black. Poly had six principals in seven years. The curriculum didn't change to meet these new conditions. Community tensions and student alienation kept the school in a state of instability and crisis.

Finally, in response to demands to make the programs of the school more responsive to the needs of students, the school board of San Francisco called in IAUE, The Institute for the

Advancement of Urban Education, to conduct a survey and initiate an alternative program at Polytechnic High School.

After presenting the background at Poly High, the film shows the initial processes initiated by IAUE in setting up the Student-Directed Curriculum Project, or SDC. These processes consisted of:

1. Identifying the elements of the problem more clearly.

2. Initiating a collaborative planning process involving all of the stakeholder groups--people who had a stake in the success of the school.

3. As a result of these processes, designing and helping to manage a pilot program incorporating all of the components of an alternative educational approach.

Representatives from various stakeholder groups are then shown expressing their opinions and personal grievances about the educational program at Poly.

The greatest insights come from the students themselves as they are seen commenting about the way they are being educated. The shortcomings of the traditional classroom are starkly exposed through the observations of this group of youngsters.

The film proceeds from the gathering of data stages to showing how the data was put to use in designing the program itself.

The question, "How can the elements of an educational environment be adapted to the needs and concerns of students?" becomes the guiding inquiry to the implementation of the Student-Directed Curriculum Program.

One of the first phases of the program is the formulation of new curricular options organized around three broad areas--communications, behavioral studies, and technical-environmental studies.

The multi-ethnic group of 50 students chosen by lottery to participate in the pilot program is shown discussing the directions they feel SDC ought to take and what they hope to accomplish in school. They present their ideas on units of study which they consider valuable and interesting.

Then mini-units are developed which center around student interests.

Each unit has explicit behavioral objectives for the student to achieve which make him less dependent on an instructor's lesson plans, and which permit more individualized learning.

With the wide variety of curriculum options each student shapes his own program of study. Instructional goal sheets are used to record student choices and accomplishments. Personalized statements relate units of study with the student's own motivations.

Learning is portrayed as a mutual endeavor with facilitator and student working toward the same ends.

Students are shown designing their own learning areas in the three temporary buildings on the school grounds where the program was conducted. Other strategies for enhancing group cohesiveness and each student's self-image--important objectives of SDC--are presented.

The film shows how the team of six facilitators, including three non-credentialed members of the community, apply the teaching skills called for in SDC.

They are seen providing individual assistance, probing students for their ideas, counseling, identifying objectives, conducting small groups, guiding independent inquiry and directing learning forays into the community.

A portion of the film is devoted to the comments and reactions of one of the facilitators to teaching in SDC--what it requires of her and how it makes teaching both more difficult and more interesting.

Students are seen capitalizing on the opportunities provided by SDC to express their individuality and creativity. They are seen creating posters which reflect their own aims and political and social beliefs. Dancing, fencing and making macrame are part of an elective program focusing on physical recreation and the arts. One boy recites poetry that he composed in the more individualized atmosphere of SDC.

The Student-Directed Curriculum Project helped students to see that education is part of the experiences occurring each day throughout their community. The film shows students going to a laboratory in the city for the information they needed for a unit in genetics. Students are shown going to stores in the community to collect data on pricing practices among producers and distributors.

At the end of the film students comment on the meaning of SDC to them. Again, the students present clear evidence that they possess the best insights on the value of an educational experience.

Implicit themes running throughout this film are the need to humanize educational processes, and the value of multi-ethnic groupings as a means to improve communication among persons of all backgrounds.

Time: 21 minutes Color-Sound

Rental: $30.00 Purchase: $250.00